

Period pain

It's common to have pain or discomfort before or during your period. There are things you can do to help ease the pain.

Check if it's period pain

Period pain usually happens to women around the start of their period. It can affect anyone who has periods.

You may have period pain if:

- you have pain in your tummy at the start of your period, or several days before your period
- you have painful cramps in your tummy that spread to your back and thighs
- you have a sharp pain or a dull ache in your tummy

Period pain usually lasts for up to 3 days and can affect your daily activities.

How you can ease period pain

There are some things you can do to help ease period pain.

Do

-

have a warm bath or shower

-

-

use a heat pad or hot water bottle wrapped in a tea towel on your tummy

-

-

try massaging your tummy and back

-

-

try some gentle exercise like yoga, swimming, walking or cycling

-

-

use painkillers like [paracetamol](#) or [ibuprofen](#)

-

Information:

[Cutting down on alcohol](#) and [not smoking](#) may also help ease period pain.

Causes of period pain

Period pain happens when your womb tightens during your period. It's often a normal part of the menstrual cycle.

Sometimes painful periods can be caused by a condition such as:

- womb tissue growing in other places ([endometriosis](#) and [adenomyosis](#))
- growths in and around the womb ([fibroids](#))
- an infection of the womb, fallopian tubes and ovaries ([pelvic inflammatory disease](#))

An [intrauterine device \(IUD\)](#) can also cause period pain, particularly during the first 3 to 6 months after it's put in.

Urgent advice: Ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from NHS 111 if:

- your pelvic pain or period pain is severe or worse than usual, and painkillers have not helped

You can call 111 or get help from [111 online](#).

Non-urgent advice: See a GP if:

- your periods become more painful, heavier or irregular
- you have pain during sex or when peeing or pooing
- you're bleeding between periods

Treatments for period pain

If you have severe period pain, a GP may recommend:

- anti-inflammatory medicines like [naproxen](#), flurbiprofen or mefenamic acid
- a [TENS machine](#) – a small device that uses mild electrical impulses to reduce pain
- [contraception](#) like the pill, implant or injection – these thin the womb lining, making your period lighter and easing the pain

The GP may refer you to a specialist (gynaecologist) if your period pain does not get better.

You might need tests, such as an [ultrasound scan](#), to find out what's causing your period pain. If a condition is found, treating it will help.

For example, if you have fibroids, you may be given medicine to shrink them or have surgery to remove them. If you have pelvic inflammatory disease, you'll usually need antibiotics.